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Who: Brenda Gilbertson, Sarah Englebert, Michelle Philibeck, Laura Daniels, Carrie Mess, and Kristy Pagel (from left in photo below) and many more Dairy Girls.



Dairy Girls Network leadership team

What: Dairy Girl Network (#DairyGirl)

Where: Nationwide, USA

Women have always worked in the heart of agriculture – often behind the scenes, going unnoticed in the shadow of others. Over time, their roles have changed so that today more women have achieved up-front-and-center roles.

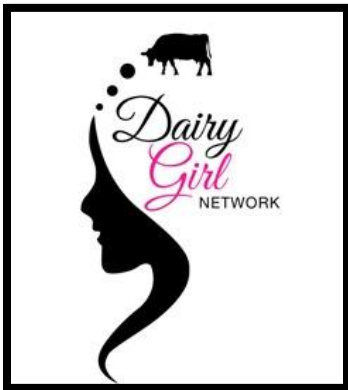
Producer Spotlight

Dairy Girls connect, inspire, achieve



By Kristy Pagel
Regional Sales Manager
Diamond V

They've engaged in ag careers as owners, managers of on-farm operations and ag-related businesses, and leaders in ag and food organizations.



Many young women are now taking leadership roles in organizations such as FFA, 4-H, and others. They're actively participating in competitions like Dairy Challenge. They're proving that the leadership of brave women who came before them has paved the way for years to come. It's an exciting time for women in agriculture!

Diamond V recognizes the role and importance that women have in all aspects of agriculture. As a passionate Wisconsin Dairy Girl, I was ecstatic that

Diamond V was one of the founding partners to launch the Dairy Girl Network during the 2014 World Dairy Expo, supporting the dreams and passionate efforts of the founder of Dairy Girl Network, Laura Daniels, a dairy farmer and nutritionist from Cobb, WI. The grassroots initiative started in 2013, when 45 women met for an evening dinner. The initial response was very positive and spurred further development of the Dairy Girl Network.

Connecting across dairy industry

The Dairy Girl Network connects all kinds of women of the dairy industry, encouraging ideas and camaraderie in an effort to achieve personal and professional development. It is designed to be a welcoming network of passionate women involved in dairy so that relationships can grow, providing support and inspiration to others and helping them accomplish their goals.

"I felt welcomed so whole-heartedly by all the other women at the Dairy Girl Network launch event," says Kimberly Condon, operations manager-in-training at Condon Dairy Farm, Juneau, WI. "I was very nervous at first because I am a new generation coming into a changing industry and was worried about feeling out of place. Many women taught me that there are many positions for women on the farm.

"As my family's dairy farm is expanding," Condon adds, "we have more diverse tasks that will need to be accomplished and often they involve things I enjoy – law, finance, operations management, planning, new technology, and gadgets – anything that needs organizing!

"This year is a transition period for me as I learn what my role will need to include. I am now taking online courses in agribusiness to supplement my business-marketing-graphic communications degree from Carroll University."



The opportunity to connect, inspire, and help women achieve are the core components of the Network.

In addition to Laura Daniels, the Dairy Girl Network leadership consists of:

- Kristy Pagel, Diamond V
- Sarah Englebert, Elanco
- Brenda Gilbertson, DairyBusiness
- Carrie Mess, Dairy Carrie (blogger and ag advocate)
- Michelle Philibeck, ImmuCell

This leadership team will be coordinating additional networking events in 2015 to expand the over 1,000 women already connected from coast to coast. Committees in formation now will develop initiatives like "Inspire," the Dairy Girl mentor program, which will connect women of all ages across state lines with similar interests, allowing an opportunity for them to grow personally and professionally in their careers.

Great resource in dynamic times

Many women, like Jamie Witcpalek, human resources manager at Pagel's Ponderosa Dairy in Kewaunee, WI and Sandy Larson, owner and business operations manager at Larson Acres in Evansville, WI, look to Dairy Girl Network as a great resource that offers support within the industry as it enters a period of tighter margins and dynamic conditions.

"The different women in the group offer a variety of experience and education," Witcpalek says. "Women want to support and help one another, so having the opportunity to have several connections is important."

Likewise, Larson comments: "As one of the successors in my generation on our family dairy, I am becoming a part of the conversations on budgeting, capital purchases, and labor. Weekly meetings with my family management team have already allowed me to be part of the daily operations of my dairy."

“Being able to submit questions to the group, seeking help and/or advice on projects will benefit me,” Larson adds. “Someone else has likely already been involved in a similar project and may be willing to share it with me, saving me time and money, allowing us to move to the next item on our huge to-do list.”

Dairy Girl Network events are planned for the Western Dairy Management Conference (March 3-5, Reno, NV) and Central Plains Dairy Expo (March 24-25, Sioux Falls, SD).

The Dairy Girl Network has only lightly scratched the surface of where it will go in the future – connecting, inspiring, and helping women achieve their personal and professional goals in the dairy industry. If you are interested in becoming a member or learning more about Dairy Girl Network, please feel free to contact me.

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